

mythPRINT



**Quarterly Bulletin of the Mythopoeic Society with Book
Reviews, Short Articles, Event Information, and More!**

VOL. 58 NO. 2

SUMMER 2021

WHOLE NO. 397

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Mythprint is the quarterly bulletin of the Mythopoeic Society, a nonprofit educational organization devoted to the study, discussion, and enjoyment of myth and fantasy literature, especially the works of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, and Charles Williams. To promote these interests, the Society publishes three magazines, maintains a World Wide Web site, and sponsors the annual Mythopoeic Conference and awards for fiction and scholarship, as well as local discussion groups.

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Mythopoeic Society membership: \$15/year includes an electronic subscription and \$25/year includes a paper subscription to *Mythprint*; either entitles you to members' rates on publications and other benefits.

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Reviews of mythopoeic media, discussion group reports, news items, letters, art work, notes or short articles, and other submissions for *Mythprint* are always welcome. In return for printed pieces, contributors who are not already subscribers will receive an electronic copy of the issue in which the item appears. Contributors who are already subscribers will not receive an additional copy. Please contact the editor for details on format, or send materials to:

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The Mythopoeic Society also publishes two other magazines: *Mythlore* (subscription \$25/year for U.S. Society members) and *The Mythic Circle*, an annual magazine publishing fiction, poems, etc. (\$8/issue for U.S. addresses). Subscriptions and back issues of Society publications may be purchased directly through our web site (using PayPal or Discover card), or you may contact:

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MYTHCON 51

A Virtual "Halfling" Mythcon
JULY 31 - AUGUST 1, 2021

Due to continued quarantines and health concerns, the Council of Stewards has decided to move **Mythcon 51 online**.

The next live, in-person Mythcon (52) will still be in Albuquerque, New Mexico, in 2022. Previously purchased conference memberships will automatically roll over to the next in-person conference in 2022, but if you cannot attend next year, please contact mythcon@mythsoc.org and request a refund of your original Mythcon 51 registration.

The virtual option will be very different from our usual Mythcons, but what we miss out on we hope to make up for in new and different ways, and we'll see everyone once it's safe to do so. On some level this is a chance to get back to our Mythopoeic Society roots and gather with friends (if virtually!) to just discuss what we love. Best of all, the cost of registration is steeply reduced, though prices have not been set yet.

Check back for more details on our website, www.mythcon.org.

MYTHCON 51 PROGRESS REPORT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE.

Get ready for Mythcon 51, July 31 - August 1, the first Mythcon where you don't have to leave your house to go "there and back again." This year we are scheduling over 50 events, including papers, panels, roundtables, and alternative programming such as games and watch parties, over the course of our two-day conference.

Times

All conference times will be written in Mountain US Time Zone (UTC -07:00) as the default, but Time Zone calculators will be included wherever possible: look for "What time is that for me?" links.

Programming of some kind will run Saturday and Sunday from 9:00am to 9:00pm both days to accommodate people from all corners of the globe, with the more formal programming from 10am to 5pm. We hope you'll attend what you can!

Important times to get on your calendar now include:

- Tech Check drop in hours, for those unfamiliar or less familiar with our two major platforms, Zoom and Discord. The Mythcon 51 committee is handling the technology for this event ourselves, not paying for extra tech support.
- Saturday, July 24th, 2PM-5PM, one week before the conference.
- Friday, July 30th, from 4PM-6PM, the day before the conference.
- Members Meeting
- Sunday, August 1st, from 4PM-6PM.

Zoom: This Year's Virtual Conference Medium

Many of us got very familiar with Zoom over the past year. Whether we like it or not, it has become the most widely used platform for virtual conferencing, and the Mythopoeic Society has joined the twenty-first century in purchasing a Pro suite for this conference.

We have organized the conference into several "tracks"—just like you'd have different "rooms" where you would attend programming at an in-person conference. For this conference, this means you will get several Zoom links as stand-ins for the different rooms, and you'll pop in and out of them depending on the programming you're interested in.

Discord: This Year's Virtual Conference "Space"

The Mythopoeic Society has had our own server on Discord since 2020. For this conference, we will add Conference-Only areas that only regis-

tered members can see.

So, instead of checking into a physical hotel, check out our Discord server!

You can do so at any time before the conference, giving yourself plenty of time to get comfortable with the “space.” Follow this link: <https://discord.gg/x3QTt6dbxd> and sign up for the free application. It can run in a browser or be downloaded as an app for mobile or computer. If you have any trouble with the invite, you can contact any of the Mythsoc Stewards (Alicia Fox-Lenz or Megan Abrahamson will be your best bet).

You can attend this conference without getting involved in the Discord. Registered members will be sent the same Zoom links and the times when to log in for programming they are interested in. Only a little alternative/evening programming such as watch parties and games will be Discord-only and inaccessible through Zoom.

However, we think Discord will make Mythcon 51 a much richer experience. Discord users will be able to converse between panels, either chatting by instant message text or by opening up a video chat with friends, while Zoom-only users will have to “vacate” the space after their panel, paper, or roundtable. Discord users can share links, continue conversations or start new ones, and get reminders in real time about when panels are beginning. In short, you don’t have to join us on Discord, but we hope you will.

Other Changes due to the Virtual Model

We are introducing a new model of Panels this year which we are calling “Roundtables.” These were designed to provide more active programming options mixed in with the usual model which involves passive listening and asking maybe one question at the end.

These Roundtables will encourage audience participation, and will be discussion-driven rather than presentation-driven. If you show up to a topic labeled “Roundtable,” you can expect to be asked to weigh in—what a great way to talk with fellow Mythies we haven’t seen in over a year!

Additionally, formal papers and panels will be asked to keep their programming to under an hour, ideally 45 minutes. This is to try to reduce that “Zoom fatigue” we’ve all been battling, and many of us continue to battle!

Preparing for Mythcon 51

- Register for Mythcon at www.mythcon.org by July 17th to ensure you don’t miss an update! The cost is a flat rate of \$20 with the opportunity for a reduced membership discount, so tell your friends, too!
- Join the Mythopoeic Society Discord at <https://discord.gg/x3QTt6dbxd>.
- Make sure you’re running the latest version of Zoom.
- If you are presenting or leading a panel, roundtable, or other programming, keep an eye out for an email with tips for running your session. All panels will have at least one Mythcon 51 committee member in attendance to help with technical difficulties.
- Plan to attend one of the Tech Check drop in sessions if you’re uncomfortable with any of the software.
- Get excited for this “Halfling” Mythcon!



MEET YOUR NEW MYTHSOC STEWARDS

Dennis Wise, Awards Steward

Dennis Wise is a lecturer for the University of Arizona interested in political theory and epic fantasy. He holds a PhD in 20th- and 21st-century transatlantic literature (i.e., American and English), and his academic writing has appeared in places like *Tolkien Studies*, *Mythlore*, and *The Journal of Tol-*

kien Research, among others. Right now he's working on a critical anthology of modern alliterative poetry, *Speculative Poetry and the Modern Alliterative Revival*, which is under advance contract from Fairleigh Dickinson University Press. Wise also serves as the reviews editor for *Fafnir*. In November 2020, *Fafnir* became the first academic journal to ever win a World Fantasy Award. Wise has also been a member of the Mythopoeic Society's Scholarship Awards for several years now, and he's quite excited to serve as the Society's new Awards Steward. (Pictured below.)



Holly Felmlee, Recording Secretary

Holly Y. Felmlee has been a non-profit professional in her rural Colorado community for many years, working for such groups as hospice, Red Cross, and the local community fund. In the process of writing grants for these groups, she has raised over \$3 million. She and her husband fulfilled a mutual life-long dream to join the Peace Corps by serving in Romania, 2007 to 2009. Although retired from "day" jobs, she is a novelist who is working on fanfiction related to *The Lord of the Rings*, and a historical mystery series for kids that takes place during the Constitutional Convention of 1787. She is a life-long fan of Tolkien and fantasy literature, and is super stoked to be a Steward for the Mythopoeic Society. (Pictured below.)



NEW MYTHOPOEIC SOCIETY VACANCY: SUBSCRIPTIONS MANAGER (NON-STEWARDS POSITION)

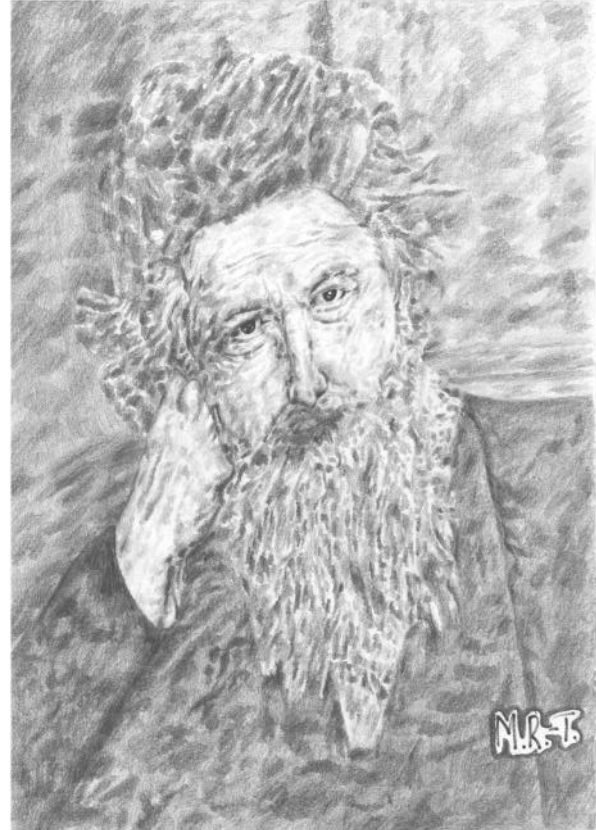
As of December 31, 2021, I will be retiring from my long-held position as Subscriptions Manager. I began my formal service to the Society in 1999 as the Membership Steward and, when the position of Subscriptions Manager was split off from that role, took on this work. It is time for me to hand on the job.

I have gotten to know many Society members, if only by name, and this has been one of the joys of the job. I know that there is some detail-oriented, service-driven person out there who would make a wonderful next Subs Manager. The Stewards will be seeking a person who can give a couple of hours a week to keeping routines going, and a few hours every quarter to getting out *Mythprint* and the mailing lists for *Mythlore* and *The Mythic Circle*. Working with the Editors, and all the Stewards, has been the biggest joy of having served this function. Please consider if you may be the next person to serve your Society in this role, and contact any Steward to express your interest.

Sincerely,
Marion VanLoo

Duties of the Subscriptions Manager

- Keep an accurate record of each personal and institutional subscriber.
- Maintain an Update File of all information added or changed for Members, and share regularly with the Membership Secretary.
- Maintain a Shipping Log of all publications sent, or caused to be sent, to subscribers/purchasers.
- Respond and/or confirm appropriately, in a timely manner, to each subscriber payment, update, or question.
- Receive and resolve claims for subscription problems, along with any subscription agency involved, the publications' editors and the Treasurer as appropriate.
- Monitor and respond as appropriate to emails sent to Claims@mythsoc.org, Subscriptions@mythsoc.org and Orders@mythsoc.org
- Send regular reminders of needed renewals for *Mythlore*, *Mythic Circle*, and to any non-member subscribers to any publication.
- Rent and maintain a PO Box for subscriptions-related mailings, with reimbursement from the Society. [Current-- Box 71, Napoleon MI 49261-0071]
- Receive, record, and deposit checks for subscriptions, memberships, and royalties, using endorsement stamp and deposit slips provided by the Treasurer.
- With reimbursement from the Society, maintain equipment as needed:
 - laser printer of quality needed for *Mythprint*,
 - scanner;
 - office supplies and postage as needed.
- Receive, record, deposit, and share with Membership Secretary, any membership information received in the Subscriptions P.O. Box.
- Submit a report to the Stewards prior to each quarterly Stewards' Meeting.
- Advise and assist publications Editors as appropriate.
- Other duties as assigned by the Orders Department Steward and/or the Council of Stewards.



"William Morris: A Portrait"
by Marc Rhodes-Taylor

WILLIAM MORRIS: HIS INFLUENCE ON ENGLISH AND FANTASY LITERATURE

By Marc Rhodes-Taylor

Lord Dunsany, E. R. Eddison, James Branch Cabell, Sir Henry Newbolt and James Joyce were all influenced by Morris's work to some degree. *The Wood Beyond The World* influenced C. S. Lewis's Narnia novels. J.R.R. Tolkien was inspired by *The House Of The Wolfings* and *The Roots Of The Mountains*, retelling the story of Kullervo from the *Kalevala* in the style of *The House Of The Wolfings*. The names Gandolf and Silverfax appear in *The Well At The World's End*. During his time Morris visited such ancient sites as Avebury and Silbury Hill. He also travelled to Iceland in July 1871 with Faulkner, W.H. Evans and Eirkur, visiting many sites including the Varna glacier and Fljotsdalur. Mor-

ris's novels were the first to be set within entirely fantasy worlds and were written in the style of medieval romance and medieval prose and were praised by Edward James as being "the most lyrical and enchanting in the English language." There has been criticism from L. Sprague DeCamp that Morris's novels depend too much upon coincidence.

Morris retold a number of Icelandic sagas including *Grettir's Saga: The Story Of Grettir The Strong* (1869), *The Story Of Gunnlaug The Worm-Tongue And Raven The Skald* (1869), *The Story Of Sigurd The Volsung And The Fall Of The Nibelungs With Certain Songs From The Elder Edda* (1870) *Three Northern Love Stories And Other Tales* (1875) and *The Voluspa Saga* (1876) all with Eirikr Magnusson. Morris met Eirikr in 1868, from whom he learned Old Norse. Morris read a summary of the Volsungs in Benjamin Thorpe's *Northern Mythology*, then added the story of Sigurd's daughter Aslaug to *The Earthly Paradise*. He also translated Homer's *The Odyssey*. Other works include *The Story Of The Glittering Plain* (1890), *The Water Of The Wondrous Isles* (1897) and *The Sundering Flood* (1898).

The Story of Sigurd the Volsung and the Fall of the Nibelungs

Morris had been familiar with this story from his youth, for at least twenty years. It was his favourite of his own poems and highly rated by T.E. Lawrence and George Bernard Shaw. J.R.R. Tolkien read Morris's novel in his student days and would later write his own version, *The Legend Of Sigurd And Gudrun* with a style and content which were closer to the heroic sagas of *The Poetic Edda* than Morris's version. Kevin Crossley-Holland published his own translation as *Axe-Age, Wolf-Age*. Edward Elgar's *Fight For Right* takes its words from *The Story Of Sigurd*.

Beowulf: The Tale Of Beowulf Done Out Of The Old English Tongue (1895)

Morris's translation of *Beowulf* was one of the first translations of this Old English poem into modern English.

The Wood Beyond The World (1894)

This is a fantasy novel and perhaps the first to unite an imaginary world with the supernatural. James Blish noted that Morris's style recaptured that of Sir Thomas Mallory.

The House of the Wolfings (1888)

This novel and *The Roots Of The Mountains* were both historical to some degree. Wolfings reconstructs the lives of the Germanic Gothic tribes, their folk ways and language, as they fight against the attacks of Rome. They worship Odin and Tyr through horse sacrifice and use seers to foretell the future. In Tolkien's *The Letters Of J.R.R. Tolkien* admitted that this novel and *The Roots Of The Mountains* influenced *The Dead Marshes* and the approach to the Morannon.

The Roots of the Mountains (1890)

This novel inspired the subplot of the *Dunedain*. There was going to be a sequel, *The Story Of Desiderius*, unfortunately this was never completed.

The Well at the World's End (1896)

Features King Gandolf, a cruel and ruthless lord of Utterbol and a white horse named Silverfax. H.G. Wells compared its style to Malory. C.S. Lewis was also impressed.

The Earthly Paradise (1868 - 1870)

Designed as a homage to Chaucer and consisting of twenty-four tales adapted from different cultures each by a different narrator. A group of Norsemen fleeing from the Black Death sail away from Europe and find an island where the inhabitants worship the Greek gods.

The Defence of Guinevere (1858)

The first ever published book of Pre-Raphaelite poetry.

A Book Of Verse

Handwritten copies of various Nordic tales including *Halfdan The Black*, *Frithiof The Bold* and *The Dwellers Of Eyr*.

Love Is Enough (1872)

A poetic drama based upon the *Mabinogion*.

THE DEVIL WRITES HOME

By S. Dorman

Mark Twain wrote diabolical monologues. These unfinished, unpolished *Letters from the Earth*

purportedly were written by the devil. They give readers insight into the technique plus a sense of this writer as creative, rational, and a moral man. Twain is simply and straightforwardly concerned both to vent some of his spleen over biblical and Christian cultural themes and beliefs, *and* to poison the pride of man.

After a carefully wrought sequence of divine splendor and creative might witnessed by the archangels, Lucifer among them, we hear first a chat with the latter's associates, a fall from grace, and then a series of sarcastic letters home to those in heaven. Lucifer tells Michael and Gabriel of his observations in rollicking satire with a deadly serious edge, but there is a sense of the incomplete narrative and definite lack of fulfillment in this work. This narrative opens to us a diabolical monologue ripe with nuanced consideration of ethics and ethical behavior, and the intriguing creativity of demonic *belles-lettres*.

For instance, naturally we want to know what Mark Twain meant by temperament (disposition) and the "moral sense," from the demonic viewpoint. Treatment of the subjects would prove fertile for analysis of the (thematic) demonic spirit. Twain's thought is based in his own brand of rationalism, and he plays it upon Judeo-Christian doctrine and themes. Satan relies on humor to exalt himself and make his subject foolish.

How does Mark Twain's Lucifer fall from grace? Before the Satanic letters proper begin, we have the narrator's account of the fall:

Satan had been making admiring remarks about certain of the Creator's sparkling industries—remarks which, being read between the lines, were sarcasms. [...] He was ordered into banishment for a day--the celestial day. It was a punishment he was used to, on account of his too flexible tongue. (Twain, Letters 14)

Here we sense the author's ready sympathy with his creative demonic point of view, also his thorough engagement with his subject. Mark Twain cares deeply about and it is his privilege to express his bewilderment and sorrow over the humanly insoluble problem of evil.

This is the *raison d'être* of the piece: What are Satan's charges against God? In his conversation with the archangels, following hard upon their witness of the sublime creation, we see it strike him as though a revelation. And we see that it is not the beauty and structure of physical creation which so occupies his attention, but rather its spir-

itual underpinning.

"That's it!" said Satan. "[...] Nothing approaching it has been evolved from the Master Intellect before. Law [...] requiring no watching, no correcting, no readjusting while the eternities endure! [...] Automatic Law! And He gave it a name--the LAW OF NATURE--and said Natural Law is the LAW OF GOD--interchangeable names for one and the same thing." (12)

While we have already thought of C.S. Lewis' *The Screwtape Letters*, here we might also think of his *The Abolition of Man*. Twain, while by no means a doctrinaire rationalist, verbally abuses what he calls in his works the "moral sense" (conscience, the *Tao*) yet, in life, he lives by it nonetheless, bemused, hurt, but an adherent. In these fictional letters and elsewhere, by natural law Mark Twain means what Christians mean by the phrase "natural man." His chief complaint is that we can in no way escape the dictates of our nature ... though it be informed and therefore condemned by the moral sense. And Twain would say that all mitigation or modification of human nature (by means of manners, self-interest, or even a conscientious effort) is but veneer.

All this accusation and outrage is rendered in a style abundant with wit, bite, horror, astonishment, befuddlement, and mingled just and unjust anger. There is great power in this prose and a reader cannot help but wonder over its artistry and edge. We are only sorry that the narrative lacks a sense of fulfillment or completion. (Most stories in this volume are incomplete.) The reader is left wanting more, but if so, what?

Mark Twain would not be able to tell us. In his essay "When a Book Gets Tired," he explains the basis of his method: As long as the book is writing itself he goes ahead with it. Should it stop, he stops. And he calls himself an *amanuensis* of the book. In his essay he declares several books in states of stoppage, plus others never to be completed, still others never to be begun owing to lack of form in which to express them. When this happens he "has only to leave it alone," until the book wants to begin work again. He describes it as going to the well and finding it filled once more. *Letters from the Earth* was a passion of his, but he never found the answer or ending to it in this life. And neither shall we. A whirlwind might blow down and speak out to us, and we would be no further along than Twain got with this fragment.

Do not suppose that, in his anger and perplexity, Mark Twain was in the service of the devil, or that he was in any way lacking in his zeal to correct the abuses of apostate Christianity. A bridge is offered between comments on the author's devils: Twain's "Letter to the Earth," written by a clerk recording Angel to a "professional Christian." In it the angel is bound to deny many (if not all) of the supplicant's public and familial prayers solely because they contradict his "secret supplications of the heart."

Here we find the swift satiric edge of Twain's prose directed with an acute clarity and logic missing in *Letters from the Earth*.

The monotony of these works, short as they are, can make for tedious reading; especially once the premise is grasped and interest in it sated. After that, generally, readers must rely upon setting the book aside (as Twain might have in writing), before coming back to it with interest renewed. I've said above that we are left wanting more of Lucifer's letters, and this would appear to contradict my sense of tedium in these narratives: In Twain we're seeking some sort of resolution within the context of the narrative, but given the subject, that of Lucifer's righteousness and his perception of God's unrighteousness, this cannot be. This devilish spirit will not be persuaded by anything, and for it to be so might be a rape of its will. As with the self-willed archetypal characters of Lewis's *The Great Divorce*, the being has become merely the expression of its complaint, and in this case immortally so. The reader senses this unyieldingness, and the unlikelihood of any lack of reprieve from it. As with our own obsessions or in listening to anyone else's, it is very wearing.

Mark Twain's Lucifer is the perfect expression of outrage. He is no innocent—otherwise he would never be able to share with us the minutia of our temptations, our evil estate. But Twain is passionately wrestling. He wrestles with both the real confusion of and his passion over the moral sense—seeing it as a two-edged sword ... coming and going, like the flaming sword protecting Eden and the Tree of Life. In Dionysian fashion, his passion sometimes gets the better of his logic. We see this in every story where he wrestles with this dilemma. Yet, however, we do not see it in "Letters to the Earth," in which the "professional Christian" is chastised. Here Twain has written a



perfect work helpful to the would-be believer; crackling, devastatingly funny, and illustrative of humanity's false position. He would say that this position is where the moral sense has landed us. His Satan might sarcastically say, "Look what God has done. Shouldn't he assume responsibility for it?"

But what would the Christian author of *The Screwtape Letters* and *The Abolition of Man*, answer? C.S. Lewis might say, "Look what is hanging on the cross."

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REVIEWS

Alexander, Frazier. *The Lost King*. Fireside Publishing, 2020. 349 pages.
Reviewed by Michael McCartney.

As an English teacher, it is always a pleasure to be pushed out of my library of familiar authors and try something new. Frazier Alexander's *The Lost King* was just the type of book that I needed - familiar elements in unfamiliar settings, beloved themes reconsidered, and engaging characters who drive the plot.

Our story opens with the return of the prince, Thalos, to Antaranis, his recently conquered homeland. While Thalos is clearly our central character, his sister Thera, struggling to overcome the drugs which the new ruler has used to pacify the populace, is another essential perspective figure. We occasionally get to experience events through the eyes of other characters but, ultimately, this narrative is

about the siblings and their personal struggles. And what struggles they face! The loss of their kingdom and family is at the core of every move they make and each tortured, haunted thought. Equally important from a thematic perspective seems to be the replacement of the Seven Virtues of Antaranis, the guiding moral philosophy of this world, with the two new ideas set up by the usurpers. In this binary, we see Alexander presenting an initial choice between what might be called the traditional virtues of the Greco-Roman world, “Humility, Wisdom, Honor, Courage, Justice, Peace, Love” (Alexander 2) and a sort of hedonistic totalitarianism that purports universal equality while also instituting capital punishment against supporters of the old king.

While I may have made this story seem rigidly this-or-that so far, it certainly isn't. In fact, so numerous are the characters and places, that I initially wished that Alexander had included a map of his world and divided his principle glossary by character, geography, and object instead of just alphabetically. However, as the novel unfolded, I realized that my sense of being adrift in a sea of the unfamiliar echoed what almost all of the characters were feeling. Whether it was the royal siblings deprived of home and purpose, the Loyalists who have lost their place in the world, the citizens who have given themselves over to mindless revelry, or even the other explorers who Thalos encounters along the way, everyone in this book is unmoored. The world has changed so fast and in such unexpected ways that the familiar seems like a phantasm just out of reach while the unfamiliar appears suddenly and with frightening frequency. It is perhaps something with which a reader in 2021 can empathize.

It would be reductive to call this story a “sandals and sorcery” tale - although there are both sandals and sorcery in the first chapter. Ultimately, there's so much more to it than that - especially for Tolkien and Lewis aficionados! *The Lost King* is peppered with allusions for those of us steeped in Inklings lore - but not in a heavy-handed way. Instead, Alexander deftly plays with the elements of each author's work the way a jazz musician spins out variations on a theme. While we feel the echoes of Tolkien's Aragorn when we see that Prince Thalos has returned, he is immediately confronted by the novel's villain, the witch-queen Sundra, who is absolutely reminiscent of Jad-

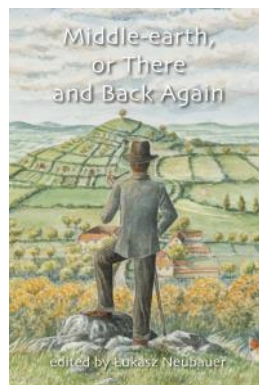
is, Lewis's diabolical White Witch. Watching the alchemy that comes from this combination was enough to instantly draw me in. As the novel unfolds, we find elements of an Earthsea-meets-Ancient-Greece archipelago, populated by adventurers who blend elements of the vikings and the argonauts, an army of Loyalists led by a prophetic giant owl who tugs at the memories of Aslan in my mind, and wicked orcs who seem to be a mixture of everything wicked that Mordor and the Calormen Empire could imagine. The brew is initially heady but it becomes an absolute delight.

I don't like spoilers so I won't reveal what happens to Thalos, Thera, and those loyal to them - but in a way, that's perfect for this story. All of our characters, whether heroes, villains, or those who walk the line, spend much of this novel in a haze of uncertainty. Alexander gives us a number of questions to chew on throughout his tale: Can a culture or society turn back the clock - and should it? Do we need a king or hero to save us? What is the cost of freedom and who determines what it means?

If those questions - plus dynamic heroes, strange monoliths, wicked enchantments, island-hopping adventure, mysterious ruins, and a host of dryads, unicorns, trolls, griffins, and ghosts, - aren't enough - then this isn't the book for you. As for me, I can't wait to read more of Alexander's work!

Neubauer, Łukasz. *Middle-earth; or There and back again*. Zürich: Walking Tree Publishers, 2020. Reviewed by Larry Swain.

This collection of six essays plus introduction is a welcome addition to Tolkien scholarship. The volume contains essays that examine sources and influences on various aspects of Tolkien's work. While this approach is not in itself something new, the authors in this assemblage cover other texts than *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, with a single exception. The collection comes in at about 126 pages of reading. It is a welcome addition to Tolkien scholarship; in part, this is because all the contributors work in eastern Europe and have a wide range of professional interests and expertise that they bring to bear on the topics they study here.



In Leśniewski's initial essay, the author covers a large territory from the famous bet between Lewis and Tolkien to the Atlantis myth and Tolkien's dreams of a flood. In addition, the author draws an analogy between how Plato constructs his myth out of strands of pre-existing materials and Tolkien's own myth-making. But one important, vitally important, strand for Tolkien is missing: as much influence on both content and style of the Akallabeth as Plato's and Tolkien's own dream, just as important is the Biblical myth of Noah's Flood, itself like Plato's mythmaking, made of strands of pre-existing mythic material. It may have been useful to speak less of the "bet" which is not directly relevant to the essay's subject and to say something about the Biblical material and background. This criticism should not detract from the value of what is in the essay, however.

Neubauer's essay, "Tolkien's Christian Reinterpretation of the Traditional Germanic Ideals of Heroism and Loyalty in *Lord of the Rings*" argues that Tolkien reinterpreted the heroics of Byrthnoth in the "Battle of Maldon." Byrthnoth is fortunate enough to have a Viking force trapped on a small island connected to the mainland by a narrow strip of land (available only at low tide). The Viking leader challenges Byrthnoth to allow them safe passage to the mainland in order to engage in battle. Byrthnoth allows this, and as a result he loses his life and the battle. Byrthnoth's Germanic *ofermod*, a word on which Tolkien wrote and interprets as "overmastering pride," an overconfidence in a victory against the invading force, cost him all. Neubauer argues that the bridge at Khazad-Dum is a reinterpretation of the poem. Gandalf stands blocking a narrow connection between forces; but his stand is not based on "overmastering pride" but rather ultimate sacrifice.

Kowalik examines the influence of the *Pearl* poem on Tolkien, particularly in the sense goldsmithing, and rings. The author argues, quite cogently, that *Pearl* is a more likely source than Wagner for the ring imagery so important to the novel. In this examination of connections between the poem and Tolkien's narrative, many of which to my knowledge have not been noted before, the author does not include the Nibelungenlied or the notion of "ring-giver" in the context of discussing the influence on Tolkien's own development of thought. On the other hand, many of the parallels, such as the father/jeweler's stubborn pursuit of his Pearl across the threshold of life and death and almost

across the final barrier, Kowalik sees paralleled in Gollum's pursuit of the One Ring. The father is also likened to Bilbo, for both in the end give up the Ring to another. It is appreciated to bring the *Pearl* poem into Tolkien studies, too often overlooked.

The next two articles in the collection add to our knowledge of Tolkien by discussing *The Fall of Arthur* in the context of the Medieval Romance tradition, and "The Story of Kullervo" in the context of Finnish myth in the Kalevala. From this reader's perspective, addressing these two somewhat recent, posthumous publications is welcome. Sadly, the article by Blaszkiewicz on Tolkien's indebtedness to the alliterative Romance tradition is the briefest article in the collection! Would that there were more!

The final contribution explores the notions of wisdom in *Lord of the Rings* arguing that Galadriel rather than the "Marian" interpretation is really more a "Lady Wisdom" (my term) rooted in St. Paul's statements that the wisdom of the world is folly, but divine wisdom which appears as folly is truly wise. I am not convinced that these are dichotomous or separate in a polysemous characterization such as Galadriel. Furthermore, Mary takes on many of the aspects of Wisdom as a divine figure as veneration of her becomes more important. Nonetheless, this is an interesting and convincing argument to consider when examining the role of Galadriel in the *Legendarium*.

The essays collected here are interesting and thought-provoking contributions to Tolkien Studies. They are accessible to readers who know Tolkien; knowledge of the other texts mentioned is not required. It is to be hoped, however, that these essays will spur readers to become familiar with the other texts as well as further think on Tolkien's creative works.

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